

## WAR AND WOMEN

From two separate sources comes the report of a suggestion that has been made by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Now it has always been the guiding principle of this column to refer with respect to women and to clergymen. The Argonaut may contain other columns that are actuated by lesser ideals, but here at least we have kept ourselves immaculate. The strain has sometimes been a severe one, and if we now fall from grace we will urge an irreproachable record in mitigation of sentence.

The Archbishop suggests that soldiers should be encouraged to marry before starting for the front, and not only to marry, but to consummate their marriages. Now if anything nastier than this has yet emanated from a mouth-piece of official theology, we have yet to hear of it. But in the meantime it is a record, a high-water mark, a peerless and unapproachable triumph of sexual offensiveness. It stinks.

We know exactly what the Archbishop means. He wants to see an unchecked supply of baby soldiers. Indifferent to the miseries of these artificially made widows, he would usher into the world an army of orphans in order that the less than 50 per cent of them who happen to be boys may serve to keep the military forces at the point of efficiency. Casting his eye over the human stockyards, he perceives with regret that a large amount of good breeding material is likely to be destroyed unused. "Couple them off quickly," says the Archbishop, in effect. "I will bless the unions in the name of God and then you can hurry the males off to the slaughter trenches and the female to the breeding-pen. It is true that such proceed-

ings may smack somewhat of a brutal animality, but I shall remove this little objection by means of the customary incantations. Babies we must have."

We may wonder what the women will have to say to this. In England an Archbishop is sacrosanct, thinks to the slavish adulation of women themselves. But this astonishingly frank utterance, an utterance that lowers men and women alike to the status of the stud farm must surely arouse some protest. We will refrain from saying that this is not the kind of thing that we should expect from an Archbishop, seeing that it is precisely what we should expect from an Archbishop.

Here, too, we have an insight into the real meaning of what is called the race suicide campaign. Do you suppose in the innocence of your heart that these energetic campaigners are anxious lest there shall be insufficient men to harvest the crops and to conquer the wilderness? Not a bit of it. They are thinking of the army and the navy, and nothing else. Their only conception of national strength is regiments and warships. Their only definition of a woman is a piece of human mechanism used for the production of soldiers and sailors. The present war will be followed by a revival of the race suicide campaign. Women will be approached in terms of adulation and they will be imported in the sacred name of patriotism to "get busy," so to speak, to increase and multiply. And at the same time there will be a tendency to minimize the importance of the marriage ceremony and to condone irregularities of all kinds so long as they may result in an increased birth rate. This was the case in France after the Revolution. The highest evidence of patriotism was

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a certain obvious expectancy, and the more obvious the better. For once the natural rights of maternity were independent of all other things and no conventional barriers to motherhood were tolerated.

We shall see something of the same sort after the present war. We may reasonably believe that several million men will be killed, and it will be necessary to replace them. The conventions of today will not be allowed to interfere with that supreme need. Religion will not be allowed to insist upon her formulas or to collect her

fees in money and subservience. Motherhood, no matter under what conditions, will be honored and rewarded. We shall revise all our ideas of morality, and if most of them are revised wholly out of existence we are not likely to miss them. We need hardly ask the result on what is now called feminism, since there will be no toleration of the woman who refuses to have children, just as there will be no honor too great for the woman who becomes a mother, and "no questions asked." And so we are likely to see a reversion to a real

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